

Rt. 12, Frederick, Md. 21701
10/15/76

Mr. Ben Bradlee, editor
The Washington Post
1150 17 St., NW
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Mr. Bradlee,

Today's Post exemplified the just causes the people, especially the young people, have for lacking trust in the press.

You have Charles Sfeb asking for self-censorship in favor of government secrecy on the op ed page and a ~~xxxxx~~ review of an irrelevant book in which you not only perpetuate these secrets the Post has kept but pretend they do not exist.

The combination alone raises what I believe are basic questions. One is of the integrity of the press and the Post in particular. Another is the role in which the press, again the Post in particular, has cast itself in recent years. For all practical purposes, from my own experience and observation, on basic political issues the press considers itself a fourth army of government, complaining only that the government does not recognize this and does not recognize the superior wisdom of the press.

Mine is among the more extensive experiences with government secrecy. I know of no one else who has made as much effort, including in court, to end this corrupting secrecy. In no single case have I ever found a legitimate secret. In every case I have found that the law was corrupted to hide what is embarrassing to government. I can recall no secret ever published that was harmful to national security in any way. Generally it is the other way around. The classic example is of the Bay of Pigs, a disaster visited upon us by press secrecy. Most of the world knew something like it was coming. Only the American people did not because the press, including the Post, failed in its primary obligation.

The review is of George McMillan's "The Making of an Assassin." The review, like the book, assumes that James Earl Ray killed Dr. Martin Luther King. Without this assumption who cares about James Earl Ray or his alleged background? It is possible for Mr. McMillan to write this book only because in it he does not address any of the fact of that terrible crime. In this he commits such a crime himself. The Post compounds it.

As you know, there has never been a trial. Two days after this was assured The New York Times carried a report on a number of books that had been contracted, all in support of the so-called solution of this most costly crime in our history. All assumed Ray's lone guilt. Mr. McMillan is quoted as saying "that he had a 'very happy contract' and that foreign reprint contracts had already been signed by publishers in eight countries." For what? "A psychological study of Ray." On what basis? "I have always believed that James Earl Ray did it alone... This guy is a loner. And I have never investigated any aspect of a

conspiracy, which has left me free to work on his biography." Rather than investigate any-thing, having investigated neither the crime nor the lingering question of conspiracy - no doubt the reason you describe your Plutarch as an investigative reporter, "hired a psychiatrist" so he could better understand that omnipresent mythology that is the subject of previous correspondence between us, "what does it do to a guy to sleep in the same bed with his parents when he is growing up."

"By this tribute to "investigative reporting" you and McMillan have made assassins of a fair percentage of the world's population ~~where~~ the actualities of life permit no other sleeping.

Mr. McMillan was explicit on his not investigating anything. On March 13, 1969 this Times interview has him saying "his book was to have been published four months after the end of the Ray's trial" but with the avoidance of a trial "The date may be pushed forward." From this the Post interprets, "McMillan's book is the product of seven years of work."

For a hardback book to be published in less than four months requires that it be ready for ~~manufacture~~ manufacture. The normal spread is six months. The only reason for the delay is that the same day McMillan boasted of his derring-do in assuming rather than investigating James Earl Ray wrote the judge he was appealing. And obviously without reason to believe that Ray alone killed Dr. King any biography of him is worthless and entirely irrelevant. Thus you have converted it into "an explosive breakthrough" and "a significant addition to the millions of words already expended on the King assassination." To this you add falsehood, that the "previous books (say) that there was no conspiracy and that Ray was a lone racist ideologue." There is one book on the King assassination the Post did not review, consistent with the Post's long history. It does address the evidence, unlike McMillan's, and it does prove that Ray could not have been a lone assassin. Faithful to Orwell the Post did review all those books that avoided any investigation of the crime itself and thereby support the official mythology. As you know, the single book of which you have not informed your readers, the single book that is based on the facts of that horrible crime, is my Frame-Up.

Consistent with this the Post has refused to print what I have since made available to it as the result of a long and partially successful -and entirely unsubsidized - effort to bring the suppressed official evidence to light. This would have been more appropriate for a weekly paper like the Post, but it had no interest in fact and truth. Last year I gave away dozens of evidence I had obtained from these secret files you want kept secret, evidence that proves beyond question that the crime was not and could not have been committed as officially alleged. This also proves that the Department of Justice and the FBI are party to a frame-up, of a man and of history. Your plug for the McMillan book is consistent with this. Extraordinary indeed!

There have been about a dozen hearings and calendar calls in my suit for this suppressed evidence. Again it is consistent for the Post to have made no mention of what is in evidence in that case. This is not extraordinary. And consistent with the Stief plea for the protection of official secrets the Post also failed to report the first time the government was defeated in court when it invoked national security. This, ~~star~~ of course, is even less newsworthy now because that was done to protect our first unelected President. It is less newsworthy ^{still} when he is running for that office. That he could steal and then sell this "national security" information, after which he lied under oath about it in his confirmation hearing, certainly was not news then, when I published it or now that there is controversy about that testimony. With this in mind please look at the headlines on the front page of this morning's Post.

There was an evidentiary hearing, the only time there was the testing of any evidence relating to the King assassination, in federal district court in Memphis in October 1974. The Post was there. McMillan was not. "Naturally when evidence was to be tested as our system of justice tests evidence that was no place for the author of any of those millions of words your reviewer refers to. Least of all was it a place for McMillan to be. He could not have been ~~here~~, as the Post knows and fails to say, and still publish this book. The reason is simple, if it is secret from the readers of the Post: all the basic allegations made against Ray were refuted - without cross-examination or rebuttal. If you doubt this I have the transcripts and you may read them or have anyone else read them for you.

And thus you find an irrelevant book a "breakthrough." Orwell could not have ~~said~~ said it better.

After providing us with an apt encapsulation of traditional American concept of the role of the press in comparison with government, Jefferson came to regret it. If he were alive today he would realize that on these gut political issues there is no real distinction between press and government. This is painful for one who reveres the tradition of ^{Zenger} ~~Zenger~~ and Paine. It is destructive of any concept of a representative or truly free society. If this is what it takes to publish a major paper today, we are lost. And if this is the kind of editor you want to be, I do sorrow for you,

Sincerely,


Harold Weisberg